



**Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Department  
Office of Governor Deval L. Patrick  
Press Release**

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## **GOVERNOR PATRICK SIGNS LEGISLATION TO INCREASE ACCESS TO SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT, RECOVERY SERVICES IN THE COMMONWEALTH**

BOSTON – Wednesday, August 6, 2014 – Governor Deval Patrick today signed S. 2142, “An Act to Increase Opportunities for Long-Term Substance Abuse Recovery,” which removes barriers to treatment for individuals battling addiction, and puts in place safeguards to help stem the tide of addiction facing the Commonwealth and the region.

“This law puts Massachusetts on the leading edge of access to addiction treatment and recovery services,” said Governor Patrick. “Those battling the effects of addiction should never face barriers to treatment, and this law ensures that the doors of recovery are open.”


The Act, which recently passed both houses of the Legislature with unanimous support, specifically:

- Requires insurers to reimburse patients for addiction treatment from licensed counselors, which will improve access to treatment for those struggling with addiction.
- Removes prior-authorization requirements for outpatient substance abuse treatment and provides for coverage of up to 14 days in an inpatient setting, if deemed medically appropriate. This provision will remove barriers to treatment that some patients have experienced and gives patients and clinicians discretion over a patient’s treatment plans.
- Gives the Department of Public Health (DPH) new regulatory authorities to reduce abuse of opioids and provides emergency scheduling powers to temporarily ban dangerous substances like bath salts and K2, when circumstances warrant. This will stem the tide of dangerous substances that are fueling the addiction epidemic.
- Requires chief medical examiners to report overdose deaths to DPH and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, improving the ability of public health agencies to quickly identify and implement measures to reduce the risk of further overdoses.

“This legislation is a comprehensive and responsible approach to addressing the drug addiction epidemic facing the Commonwealth,” said Senate President Therese Murray. “Addiction is a chronic disease and we must remember to treat it as such. According to an analysis recently done by the Comparative Effectiveness Public Advisory Council, New England states could save an estimated \$1.3 billion by expanding treatment by 25 percent. Through this bill, we are offering a full continuum of care for our residents and communities, helping them to successfully recover and effectively break the cycle of addiction.”

“This legislation is a significant step forward as we continue to address the rise in substance addiction that is so tragically devastating lives across the Commonwealth,” said House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo. “The bill provides a strong foundation by increasing access to care and changing the way we monitor and respond to addiction. I thank Governor Patrick, Senate President Murray and my colleagues in the Legislature for making Massachusetts a national leader in confronting this unprecedented public health crisis.”

On March 27, 2014, Governor Patrick declared a public health emergency and gave DPH the authority to take immediate steps to address the opioid crisis, including making naloxone (Narcan) widely available to first responders, and accelerating mandatory enrollment of prescribers in the Prescription Monitoring Program.

The Patrick Administration also launched an Opioid Task Force, chaired by Public Health Commissioner Cheryl Bartlett, RN, which produced specific policy recommendations this summer to strengthen the Commonwealth’s response to this public health emergency. The Legislation signed by Governor Patrick today further supports the work of the Task Force, which can be found [here](#) .

“This law is another important step forward in the Commonwealth’s nationally-recognized effort to combat the opioid addiction epidemic,” said Commissioner Bartlett. “We are increasing access to treatment for those who desperately need help, and giving the Department the authority and tools to continue to take aggressive action.”

In June, Governor Patrick convened a meeting of the New England governors at Brandeis University to discuss a regional response to the opioid epidemic. The meeting resulted in agreements to explore cross-border Prescription Monitoring Program data sharing and registration to help prevent prescription misuse and abuse across the region.

The Fiscal Year 2015 budget invests in a number of recommendations made by the Opioid Task Force, including a new, \$10 million trust fund to increase substance abuse treatment, \$1 million to expand access to naloxone for overdose reversal and \$500,000 for accreditation of sober homes.

“This bill to increase access to treatment will help many individuals to break through the cycle of addiction, work actively on long-term recovery and save countless lives

throughout the Commonwealth,” said Senator Jennifer L. Flanagan. “I applaud the legislature and Governor for acting on this historic opportunity to offer appropriate, effective treatment to patients at all levels of care; promote awareness and treatment of addiction as a chronic disease; and to begin to curtail the public health crisis that is affecting all of our communities.”

“I am proud to say that today we are bringing hope to individuals and to families struggling with addiction,” said Senator John F. Keenan. “With this legislation, Massachusetts is taking groundbreaking steps on all fronts – awareness, prevention, treatment and recovery – to combat the opiate epidemic. We are not finished here, but we have come together to get some truly important work done.”

“After listening to emotional and compelling testimony from residents across the Commonwealth, the need for greater accessibility to treatment became clear,” said Senator Joan Lovely. “This bill, along with the funding allocated in the FY15 budget, makes progress in establishing an effective continuum of care for those struggling with addiction and it’s very encouraging to see Massachusetts take meaningful action on this pervasive issue.”

“Substance abuse and addiction cases are on the rise, especially in the Western part of the state,” said Senator James T. Welch. “This bill takes important steps towards prevention and improving access to treatment, so that individuals can get the help that they need.”

“I am proud to have worked with my fellow legislators on the passage of this bill,” said Representative Jennifer Benson. “This legislation has a thoughtful and balanced approach to treatment practices that will not only remove barriers for those seeking treatment or in recovery but also brings positive changes to the way we respond to the unprecedented public health crisis that has arisen within our Commonwealth. With the signing of this bill, individuals are ensured increased access and coverage opportunities as they work to overcome their addictions.”

“Unfortunately, substance abuse has become one of the most critical issues facing our region,” said Representative Vinny deMacedo. “It touches our neighbors and friends in virtually every community. We have an epidemic on our hands that cannot be ignored. I am proud to have supported this critical legislation and commend the Governor for quickly signing it into law because it takes a realistic and multi-faceted approach to this difficult and complex problem. I have no doubt that this legislation will make a significant difference in the lives of far too many families in the Commonwealth.”

“As a legislator and most importantly as a citizen of our Commonwealth, I am grateful that the Speaker of the House, the Senate President and the Governor provided the strength, support and leadership to address the epidemic of substance abuse that is ravaging our families and communities,” said Representative Denise Garlick. “This legislation provides substantive ways for prevention, as well as promoting access to care.”

“An introduction to treatment gives people struggling with substance abuse a glimpse of what life can be like away from what has given them so much trouble,” said Representative John J. Mahoney. “This bill requires insurers to cover treatment and thus removes a major barrier between addicts and a lasting recovery.”

“This bill will allow those suffering from active addiction to reach out at a critical time of clarity and access treatment of their choice to begin a new life in recovery,” said Representative James O'Day.

“Substance abuse is a very personal yet public health crisis and we need to be there for people when they need us,” said Representative Jeffrey Sánchez, “This legislation will increase access and coverage to care for those who are affected by the scourge of addiction.”

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